

H1N1 AKA SWINE FLU

A FACT SHEET

NOVEMBER 2009

PREGNANT WOMEN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT H1N1 AND VACCINATION

1. I'm pregnant. Should I be vaccinated against the H1N1 flu and seasonal flu?

Yes. A pregnant woman who gets any type of flu has a greater chance for serious health problems. Getting the flu vaccination is the single best way to protect against the flu.

The CDC advises pregnant women and women who have given birth in the past two weeks to get BOTH the H1N1 and the seasonal flu shots. Healthy pregnant women have had severe illness from the H1N1 flu. Compared with people in general, pregnant women with the H1N1 flu have been more likely to be admitted to hospitals. Some pregnant women have died.

2. Will getting vaccinated harm my baby?

There is no evidence that any component of the H1N1 vaccine is harmful to the fetus. In fact, when a pregnant woman gets a flu shot, it will protect both her and her baby. Research has found that pregnant women who had a seasonal flu shot got sick less often with the flu than pregnant women who did not get a flu shot. Babies born to mothers who had a flu shot during pregnancy also get sick with flu less often than babies whose mothers did not get a flu shot.

3. I'm concerned about thimerosal. Does the H1N1 vaccine contain it?

Thimerosal is a mercury-containing preservative in vaccine that comes in multidose vials. It is used to keep vaccine free from contamination. There is no evidence that it is harmful to a pregnant woman or a fetus. However, because some women are concerned about thimerosal during pregnancy, vaccine companies are making preservative-free seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine in single dose syringes for pregnant women and small children. The CDC advises pregnant women to get flu shots either with or without thimerosal.

4. Should I get the nasal spray or the flu shot? How many doses do I need?

The flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women. The nasal spray is NOT recommended for pregnant women. It is recommended that a pregnant woman get one dose of the H1N1 vaccine.

5. What are the side effects of the vaccine? Will it give me the flu?

The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are soreness, redness, or swelling where the injection was given, low-grade fever and aches.

If side effects occur, they begin soon after the shot, are usually mild, and usually last one to two days. However, almost all people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. On rare occasions, flu vaccination can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

6. Can I get both the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine at the same time? If I just get one vaccine, do I get any protection against the other flu?

You can get the H1N1 vaccine shot at the same time as any other vaccine, but it should be given in a different site (e.g., one shot in the left arm, the other in the right arm). You CANNOT receive the H1N1 nasal spray at the same time as the seasonal vaccine nasal spray. You can, however, receive other vaccines at the same time as the nasal spray.

Seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against the H1N1 flu, nor will the H1N1 vaccine protect against the seasonal flu.

7. What if I deliver before I get the vaccine? What if I'm breastfeeding?

You should still be vaccinated for both the H1N1 and seasonal flu. Besides protecting you from infection, the shot may also help protect your baby. Everyone who lives with or cares for an infant younger than 6 months of age should get both the seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines as soon as they are available. You can get either the shot before or after delivery or the nasal spray after you deliver.

Breastfeeding is fully compatible with flu vaccination, and preventing the flu in mothers can reduce the chance that their infants will get the flu. Also, by breastfeeding, mothers can pass on to their infants the antibodies that their bodies make in response to the flu shots, which can reduce the chances of their infants getting sick with the flu. This is especially important for infants younger than 6 months old who have no other way of receiving vaccine antibodies, since they are too young to be vaccinated.

8. Should I take an antiviral medication if I'm pregnant and get the flu?

Yes. If you are pregnant and have a fever and cough or sore throat, contact your physician right away.

Changes in the immune system, heart and lungs during pregnancy make a pregnant woman more prone to severe illness from the flu. It takes about two weeks after birth or loss of a pregnancy for a woman's immune system, heart and lungs to get back to normal. For this reason, the CDC advises doctors to give antiviral medicines that treat H1N1 flu to pregnant women and women who have given birth or lost a pregnancy within the past two weeks and who have symptoms of flu.

H1N1 AKA SWINE FLU

PREGNANT WOMEN

A FACT SHEET NOVEMBER 2009

THE MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT H1N1 AND VACCINATION

MYTH 1. The H1N1 vaccine might not be safe for pregnant women.

FALSE. Flu shots have NOT been shown to cause harm to pregnant women or their babies. It's getting the H1N1 flu that's not safe for pregnant women. The risk of getting seriously ill for pregnant women is six times that of non-pregnant women because of a greater difficulty in taking deeper breaths and an inhibited immune system.

MYTH 2. I'm healthy so I don't need to worry about the H1N1 flu.

FALSE. H1N1 flu, like seasonal flu, can infect anyone. H1N1 does, however, appear to be harder on pregnant women than seasonal flu, and health experts are encouraging women who are pregnant or are thinking of becoming pregnant to get vaccinated.

MYTH 3. The H1N1 flu vaccine will give me the flu.

FALSE. The low-grade fever that some people experience after they've been vaccinated is not a symptom of the flu but a symptom of a healthy immune system fighting off an insult that has been introduced into the body to strengthen the immune system.

MYTH 4. Getting vaccinated while I'm pregnant could give my child autism.

FALSE. Multiple studies have examined the relationship between thimerosal and autism, all of which have not demonstrated any relationship.

MYTH 5. The H1N1 vaccine is untested and was rushed to market.

FALSE. The H1N1 vaccine was tested in the same manner, with the same criteria and the same safety precautions, and was manufactured in the same facilities as the seasonal flu vaccine.

MYTH 6. Getting vaccinated could cause me to miscarry.

FALSE. Getting the H1N1 vaccine does NOT increase your risk of miscarriage or any other health-related event like heart attacks or strokes.

If you are pregnant, contact your healthcare provider to be vaccinated or for answers to questions about H1N1 and seasonal flu.

New Hampshire has an H1N1 vaccine distribution plan.

When vaccine is available, the state of New Hampshire will announce when and where clinics will be held.

To find a public clinic near you, call New Hampshire's H1N1 Public Inquiry Line by **dialing 211.**



To learn more about the H1N1 flu and vaccine, go to the H1N1 Influenza Resource Center on **<http://www.nh.gov>**
NH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Public Health Services